

Prabuddha Bharata

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प्राप्य परानिबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I, iii, 4

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—Swami Vivekananda.

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CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA,

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

PART II.—XX.

[Place : *The Math, Belur.* Year—1902 (*beginning*).]

Subjects : *The religious practices of the Sannyasin disciples of Sri Ramakrishna at the Baranagore Math.—A few days of hardship in Swamiji's life.—The strictures of monastic life.]*

It was Saturday and the disciple had come to the Math just before evening. An austere routine was being followed now at the Math regarding spiritual practices. Swamiji had issued an order that all Brahmacharins and Sannyasins should get up very early in the morning and practise Japam and meditation in the worship-room. Swamiji was having little sleep during these days, and would rise from bed at 3 in the morning. A bell had been purchased, which was being used as an alarm-bell to awaken the inmates of every room.

On the disciple saluting Swamiji just after his appearance at the Math, he said, "Well, see how they are practising reli-

gious exercises here now-a-days. Every one passes a considerable time in Japam and meditation on mornings and evenings. Look there—a bell has been procured, which is used for rousing all from sleep. Everyone has to get up before dawn. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'In the morning and evening the mind remains highly imbued with Sattva ideas; those are the times when one should meditate with earnestness.'

"After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna we underwent a lot of religious practices at the Baranagore Math. We used to get up at 3 a.m., and after washing our face etc.—some after bath, and others without it—we would sit in the worship-

room and become absorbed in Japam and meditation. What a strong spirit of dispassion we had in those days! We had no thought even as to whether the world existed or not. Ramakrishnananda busied himself day and night with the duties pertaining to Sri Ramakrishna's worship and service, and occupied the same position in the Math as the mistress of the house in a family. It was he who would procure, mostly by begging, the requisite articles for Sri Ramakrishna's worship and our subsistence. There have been days when the Japam and meditation continued from morning till 4 or 5 in the afternoon. Ramakrishnananda waited and waited with our meals ready, till at last he would come and snatch us from our meditation by sheer force. Oh, what a wonderful constancy of devotion we have noticed in him!"

Disciple.—Sir, how would you meet the Math expenses then?

Swamiji.—What a question! Well, we were Sadhus, and what would come by begging and such other means, would be utilised for defraying the Math expenses. To-day both Suresh Babu and Balaram Babu are no more; had they been alive they would have been exceedingly glad to see this Math. You have doubtless heard Suresh Babu's name. He was in a way the founder of this Math. It was he who used to bear all the expenses of the Baranagore Math. It was this Suresh Mitra who used to think most for us in those days. His devotion and faith have no parallel!

Disciple.—Sir, I have heard that you did not see him very often at his death-bed?

Swamiji.—We could only do it if we were allowed (by his relatives)! Well, it

is a long tale. But know this for certain that among worldly people it is of little count to your relatives and kinsmen whether you live or die. If you succeed in leaving some property, you will find even in your life-time that there has been set up a brawl over it in your household. You will have no one to console you in your death-bed—not even your wife and sons! Such is the way of the world!

Referring to the past condition of the Math, Swamiji went on, "Owing to want of funds I would sometimes fight for abolishing the Math altogether. But I could never induce Ramakrishnananda to accede to the proposal. Know Ramakrishnananda to be the central figure of the Math. There have been days when the Math was without a grain of food. If some rice was collected by begging, there was no salt to take it with! On some days there would be only rice and salt, but nobody cared for it in the least. We were then being carried away by a tidal wave of spiritual practices. Boiled *Bimba* leaves, rice and salt—this was the menu for a month at a stretch. Oh those wonderful days! The austerities of that period were enough to dismay supernatural beings, not to speak of men. But it is a tremendous truth that if there be real worth in you, the more are circumstances against you, the more will that inner power manifest itself. But the reason why I have provided for beds and an easy living in the Math is, that the Sannyasins that are enrolling themselves now-a-days will not be able to bear so much strain as we did. There was the life of Sri Ramakrishna before us, and that was why we did not care much for privations and hardships. Boys of this generation will not be able to undergo so much hardship. Hence it is that I

have provided for some sort of habitation and a bare subsistence for them. If they get just enough food and clothing, the boys will devote themselves to religious practices, and will learn to sacrifice their lives for the good of humanity."

Disciple.— Sir, outside people say a good deal against this sort of bedding and furniture.

Swamiji.— Let them say. Even in jest they will at least once think of this Math. And they say, it is easier to attain liberation through cherishing a hostile spirit. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Men should be counted as worms (when they criticise). Do you mean we have to conduct ourselves according to the chance opinion of others? Pshaw!

Disciple.— Sir, you sometimes say, 'All are Narayanas, the poor and the needy are my Narayanas,' and again you say, 'Men should be counted as worms.' What do you really mean?

Swamiji.— Well, there is not the least doubt that all are Narayanas. But all Narayanas do not criticise the furniture of the Math. I shall go on working for the good of men, without caring in the least for the criticisms of others,—it is in this sense that the expression, 'Men are to be counted as worms,' has been used. He who has a dogged determination like that shall have everything. Only some may have it sooner, and others a little later, that is all. But one is bound to reach the goal. It is because we had such a determination that we have attained the little that we have. Otherwise, what dire days of privation we have had to pass through! One day, for want of food I fainted in the outer platform of a house on the roadside, and quite a shower of rain had passed over my head before I recovered my senses! Another day, I

had to do odd jobs in Calcutta for the whole day without food, and had my meal on my return to the Math at 10 or 11 in the night. And these were not solitary instances.

Saying these words Swamiji sat for a while pursuing some trend of thought. Then he resumed—

"Real monasticism is not easy to attain. There is no order of life so rigorous as this. If you stumble ever so little, you are hurled down a precipice—and are smashed to pieces. One day I was travelling on foot from Agra to Brindaban. There was not a farthing with me. I was about a couple of miles from Brindaban when I found a man smoking on the roadside, and I was seized with a desire to smoke. I said to the man, 'Hallo, will you let me have a puff at your *chilim*?' He seemed to be hesitating greatly and said, 'Sire, I am a sweeper.' Well, there was the influence of old Samskaras, and I immediately stepped back and resumed my journey without smoking. I had gone a short distance when the thought occurred to me that I was a Sannyasin, who had renounced caste, family, prestige and everything—and still I drew back as soon as the man gave himself out as a sweeper, and could not smoke at the *chilim* touched by him! The thought made me restless at heart; then I had walked on half a mile. Again I retraced my steps and came to the sweeper, whom I found still sitting there. I hastened to tell him, 'Do prepare a *chilim* of tobacco for me, my dear friend.' I paid no heed to his objections and insisted on having it. So the man was compelled to prepare a *chilim* for me. Then I gladly had a puff at it and proceeded to Brindaban. When one has embraced the monastic life, one has to test whether one has gone ~~he~~

yond the prestige of caste and birth etc. It is so difficult to observe the monastic vow in right earnest! There must not be the slightest divergence between one's words and actions."

Disciple.— Sir, you sometimes hold before us the householder's ideal and sometimes the ideal of the Sannyasin. Which one are we to adopt?

Swamiji.— Well, go on listening to all.

Then stick to that one which appeals to you—grip it hard like a bull-dog.

Swamiji came downstairs accompanied by the disciple, while speaking these words, and began to pace to and fro, uttering now and then the name of Shiva, or humming a song on the Divine Mother, such as, "Who knows how Thou diversely playest, O Mother, Thou flowing Stream of Nectar,"—and so on.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THE human mind is so constituted that it wants to get outside, to peer out of the body, as it were, through the channels of the organs. The eyes must see, the ears must hear and the senses must sense the external world, and naturally the beauties and sublimities of nature captivate the attention of man first; and in all ancient religions we find traces of how the groping human mind at first caught at everything external. Intoxicated with the fascinating manifoldness of this phenomenal world and bewildered by a plethora of the perplexing concerns of daily life, every individual, in spite of his god-gifted potentialities and wonderful intelligence, is inveigled unwarily into the vortex of sense-enjoyments and is thereby blinded to the inner content and meaning of mundane existence. Duped and dazed, he thus fritters away his stored up energy in mad pursuit after the shadows of worldly happiness and the enjoyment of life to its lees. But the insatiable thirst of the human soul whose song is eternal freedom, is never quenched by that drop of nature's gift and grows in intensity for further doses. So does the scripture declare with the voice of thunder

—“न जातु कामः कामानाम् उपभोगेन शाम्यति, हविषा कृष्ण-वर्त्मेव भूय एवाभिवर्द्धते”। The whole life of humanity on this lower plane is nothing but a living record of such tragic experiences at the hands of nature. Totally forgetful of what constitutes the true meaning of life, under the heavy impact of the stormy passions that lurk in the tabernacle of human body, every one is dragged down step by step unwillingly into the abysmal depths of moral turpitude until at last a bitter sense of inanity pricks up his slumbering self to the consciousness of its real nature and of what “hold” him to live and die, to whirl upon the wheel, hug and kiss its spokes of agony—its tire of tears and nave of nothingness.” A cry, like that of a first-born child, wells up from the innermost core of the heart, that opens the eternal spring and untwists the hidden soul of harmony. This bitterness of a universal dissatisfaction, coupled with a penetrating power of vision quickened through right discrimination, leads him on for a more clarified atmosphere to breathe in, where a serene tranquillity embalms the troubled spirit and an undying love for humanity sweetens the enjoyment of life. The

struggle that thus springs up in the human breast to break down the fetters of nature so as to secure a lasting preponderance over the delusive splendour of her phenomenal beauty, constitutes the first outbudding of religious ideas; the true religion consists not in a belief in a certain creed or a set of dogmas, but in the attainment of God-consciousness through spiritual unfoldment. It is being and becoming God; and the first inkling of life on this higher plane is in seeing this vigorous struggle within, to tear the veil off the face of nature and to be free. As a result of this dogged tenacity of purpose and unfaltering perseverance, a glorious vista of freedom is opened unto him, and the flood-gate of spiritual life which ensures eternal peace, grounded as it is on the adamant basis of eternal freedom, is thus unlocked for ever. The object of such a life is the transcendence of the sensuous and the attainment of the plenitude of spiritual consciousness; and in that state of supersensuous perception he feels in his heart of hearts that God is in every person—"working through all hands, walking through all feet and eating through every mouth." The more advanced a man is, the more does he feel that He is self-evident and nearer unto him than himself. He feels a quicker pulsation of the "Power Divine" and its heavenly touch in all outward manifestations of the Impersonal, until at last the polarities of the mind and all ideas of relativity become merged in the one vast ocean of ecstatic beatitude.

But what benefit does the world derive from such a saintly life whose sole concern and life-long struggle had been to unfold his own spiritual nature and to emancipate himself from the shackles of the world?

Does his life contribute in any degree to the well-being of the society or the nation? These are the questions which are found uppermost in the minds of many thinkers of the present day! Some even have gone to the length of violently condemning the *life of Sannyasa* in their rabid fervency to extol their own mode of thinking and personal predilections. That such questions should cross the imagination of those who have consigned their glorious national ideals into the limbo of oblivion and have been trying to look at things through coloured glasses is quite natural. But the fact is that these puerile hypotheses, when minutely analysed, do not stand the test of stern reality. How can such a man whose mind waxes bigger and bigger with the accession of his spiritual strength, give the go-by to the world abroad? He emerges on the other hand from the sequestered nook of his austere life and pours forth in a deluge the accumulated force of his spiritual illumination upon the whole country and transfuses a new vitality into the collective life of the nation. So, as a matter of fact the mind of such a man who seems apparently to have lived a life of utter exclusivism, transcends the narrow bounds of his so-called self-sufficiency and vibrates in greater intensity with the throbbing pathos of the suffering mankind. Sri Ramakrishna, the great teacher of the modern world, pointed out to his worthy disciple that a life of realisation is all the more glorified when that life is sacrificed at the altar of humanity; and true to the words of his Master, Swami Vivekananda, towering head and shoulders over his contemporaries in point of spiritual perfection, self-sacrifice and nobleness of heart, spent the last drop of his life's energy for the well-being of his depressed

countrymen. His burning love for even the most trivial things of his motherland and his silent spiritual activities created such an unprecedented atmosphere in this land that the Indians who were the only civilised Aryan nation on earth four thousand years ago, have, after seven centuries of national lifelessness, been showing indications of a reviving life and trying to break the hypnotic spell of foreign influence to stand on their own legs and to go beyond the dead forms of religion for recovering what is pure, nourishing and life-giving. This indeed is the ideal of a Sannyasin life, and his feckless countrymen, so long totally oblivious of their latent potentialities and their future possibilities, have been roused to the consciousness of what the self-abnegating life of a Sannyasin can do in this land of ours where renunciation, love and spirituality are the sustaining stamina of national existence. What a wonderful contrast does the life of a man who is chained down and handicapped by his personal preoccupations and distracted by his worldly environments, bear to that of a Sannyasin who stands like a rock unmoved and unfettered even in the midst of the besetting allurements and the stormy affairs of the world, with an unswerving devotion to work out the harmonious solution of all the aspects of national problems!

Such were indeed the lives of the ancient sages of India. In all ages the lives of such illumined souls had been the pillars of strength, whose mere words, instinct with spiritual fire, spoke straight to the heart and sent forth a thrill of electric current into every limb of the nation. In the halcyon days of hoary antiquity it was these great seers of Truth,

whose spiritual realisation has become the eternal heritage of mankind, that tempered the militant aspect of Hindu culture with the softening showers of their spirituality and both the Kshatriya and the Brahmanya Dharma were co-ordinated in a harmonious blending. So, as a matter of fact their lives were rather more intimately connected with the national well-being and the ultimate salvation of humanity, as they worked intrepidly amidst all the buffets of fortunes and all failures and disappointments till their final exit from the stage of the world. The mission of their lives thus fructified in the service of mankind, for they felt for their brethren as much as they did for their personal illumination.

But the days of yore, though not without many inherent evils, were undoubtedly the days of profusion and plenty. India, at that period of her political adolescence, never tasted the bitterness of economic atrophy which has now become the bane of our life and has been beating ever and anon on the shore of human experience. Much of their time which is now taken up by the corrosive anxieties to make the two ends meet, was devoted to the solution of life's intricate problems through deep spiritual culture. The profusion in economic life and the consequent immunity from the preoccupation of everyday fight for a piece of "brown bread," facilitated the efforts of the aspirant to struggle for the attainment of "Eternal Freedom"—the summum bonum of earthly existence. Naturally therefore, a freer culture of religion and the satisfaction of the higher cravings of the soul depend to a certain extent on the healthy economic outlook of the country. But even in the midst of these perplexing

questions of economic atrophy, political serfdom and social disorder, Swami Vivekananda who knew the pulse of the people, thundered forth the glorious truth that unless the fundamental basis of our national existence were stabilised, unless the current of Indian life were made to flow in its natural groove, no proper solution of these manifold problems would be arrived at. He urged with a spirit of conviction and with a forecasting vision of possibilities that all questions should be tackled with from the perspective of religion, for it has penetrated the very foundation of the daily life of the Indians. The experience of a woful lack of political solidarity in this land is due not to the influence of religion, as some would blindly think, but to the fact of her giving a go-by to the spirit of religious ideal and clinging to the mere shadows thereof, which consequently has debilitated the strong fibres of India's political, social and economic life. Some critics are still of opinion that "Buddhist precepts, literally obeyed, would lead nations to subjection, to inaction and beggary." But in response to this it may be urged that Christ too recommended a relinquishment of the world and unresisting submission to wrongs and injuries, but neither he nor Gautama Buddha intended that men should cease to be men. Religion does not teach us slavish morbidity or the suspension of the healthy culture of our noble qualities but holds before us those great models and perfect ideals of charity, love and unselfishness which lead human life to blessedness and purity. Buddha's message of the equality of men, proclaimed to the caste-ridden people of India, was large-hearted and benevolent. So long as the true spirit of religion was in full play and so long as the children of the soil remained

to true themselves in thought and action, India never wore the badge of any kind of humiliation before the world.

But with the decline of Buddhism when the disruptive elements that were kept under proper restraint through the superior controlling force, began to reassert themselves, the repellent molecules of the body-politic began their tremendous gyrations, threw the whole life of the Indians completely out of balance and disintegrated the national solidarity of India. The premature demise of Harsabardhan, the last great religious emperor of India, was a death-knell to all ideas of cohesive action and unity of purpose in the domain of politics; and as a result she became the cock-pit of contention amongst a group of petty monarchs that flourished immediately after the breakdown of the empire. History thus bears an eloquent testimony to the fact that it was then when the bonds of unity between different religious sects became slackened, when self-aggrandisement and Machiavellian policy became the watchword in all spheres of human activity with the upheaval of the degraded form of Tantrikism, that there arose, on the political horizon of India, the crescent-marked banner of Islam as an embodiment of righteous penalty to clarify, as it were, the poisoned atmosphere of Oriental politics. Religious decay was and is still the cardinal bane of our national life. But there is a silver lining of hope even in the midst of this gathering gloom of darkness. With the dawn of a new era inaugurated by the spiritual activities of Sri Ramakrishna and His heroic band of Sannyasins there are beginnings of a national consciousness amongst the people. Swami Vivekananda touched the sore-point of India's present

state of degradation and showed that unless the very basis of all our activities were spiritualised, all violent declamations for political and social reforms would count for nothing. No doubt it is true, that just as the too active Western mind would profit by an admixture of Eastern introspection and meditative habit, so the Orient would benefit by a somewhat greater activity and energy. Still we must ask, what may be that Force that causes this afflicted and downtrodden race, the Hindus, to survive when the other great nations of the world perish? The cause can only be their Spiritual Force which supplies an eternal incentive to the revitalisation of this moribund people. The more spiritual a nation is, the more does it work towards a positive state of pure freedom and the more dynamic energy

does it garner up to stand the bitterest trials in the service of the motherland. Everyone who loves his country with the wholehearted sincerity and the selfless devotion of a martyr must rally round the glorious national ideal to withstand the heavy momentum of Occidental influence and to roll back the bugbear of the so-called modernism. India is already too much swamped with the poverty of catholicity, mean jealousies and whining servility. "What our country now wants, are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face."

THE HOLY MOTHER.

THE Holy Mother has entered into Mahasamadhi. The genial figure that lived and moved and had her being as an embodiment of love and spirituality in the stifling atmosphere of this world, has gone back to her eternal abode. The world is poorer to-day for her passing away. Does it realise the irreparable loss it has sustained? Scarcely. It is too materialistic to perceive the deep spiritual issues of such a momentous event. Possibly it will take centuries to make out who and what the Holy Mother was. The world only appreciates loud actions and the Holy Mother's entire life was one of silent, unostentatious service.

Born in 1853 of poor Brahmin parents at an obscure village named Jayrambati in the District of Bankura, and bred in that simple country atmosphere, she was married at the early age of six to Sri Rama-

krishna, then unknown to celebrity. Like many other incidents in Sri Ramakrishna's life, his marriage too was remarkable. His mother and elder brother had been vainly searching for a bride—the poverty of the family being a serious drawback—when the young Gadadhar, as he was then called, emphatically told them that it was useless to search here and there; that they should go instead to S. Ramchandra Mukherji's house at Jayrambati where Providence had arranged the bride for him. Strange to say, that the marriage did actually take place with the daughter of the gentleman named.

Sri Ramakrishna was then passing through a tremendous upheaval of spiritual advancement at Dakshineswar, mastering Sadhana after Sadhana and undergoing rigorous austerities unheard of in the world's history, in quest of the high-

est Truth. So it was some years before he paid a visit of some duration to his native place, Kamarpukur. Thus about the year 1867 the Holy Mother had the first chance of being familiar with Sri Ramakrishna, who took her under his tutelage and by degrees lovingly imparted to her a thorough knowledge of human character, how to spend money for good purposes, and live in a spirit of resignation to God, behaving with men according to time, place and circumstances. His own life of perfect chastity was fittingly reflected in the life of the Holy Mother, who began to look upon Sri Ramakrishna as her Ishtadevata, and model her life upon his. Be it said here that she cherished this attitude throughout life.

In the beginning of 1872 the Holy Mother first visited Dakshineswar accompanied by her father, walking about all the distance, and having an attack of fever owing to the fatigue of the journey. She was comforted in her illness by a strange vision which assured her that she would reach Dakshineswar safely. Sri Ramakrishna cordially received her, and though allowing her full privileges of a wife, always looked upon her as the living embodiment of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna's mother, too, was living at Dakshineswar at the time. It was during this period (1873) that Sri Ramakrishna formally worshipped the Holy Mother, thus completing the last act of his Sadhana. In the same year the Holy Mother returned to Kamarpukur, and came to Dakshineswar for the second time in 1874. She was accompanying a party of female pilgrims of her village, who were coming to bathe in the Ganges on the occasion of the ensuing eclipse. Being unable to walk fast she gradually lagged behind. So she told her companions to go ahead and halt at

Tarakeswar, where she would meet them. There was an extensive waste land on the way notorious for dacoits. It was not long before the shades of evening closed around her, and she was thinking what to do, when she saw a tall, black-looking man with a long stick approaching her with rapid steps, accompanied by another at some distance. She knew it was useless to flee or cry for help. So she waited, anxiously watching them. Soon the man overtook her and roughly asked her, "Who are you standing here at this time?" The Holy Mother immediately addressed him as father and appealingly narrated in brief her predicament. The second person also appeared on the scene. The Holy Mother was comforted to see that she was a woman, and addressing her as mother took hold her hand and said, "Mother, I am your daughter, Sarada, I was in great danger being left by companions. It is most fortunate that Father and you have appeared, otherwise I do not know what I would have done."

This simple and trustful attitude of the Holy Mother melted the hearts of the low-class stalwart man and his wife, who took her to an adjacent village, gave her some food and took care of her, and the next morning took her to Tarakeswar, where they worshipped Shiva and hastened to give the Holy Mother a good meal. Her companions then met her, and when resuming her journey to Dakshineswar, she actually wept at the thought of separation from her protectors, who had treated her like their own daughter. Before parting from them she affectionately made them promise that they would see her sometime at Dakshineswar. They too were in tears, deeply moved. These strange acquaintances kept their word, and visited the Holy Mother more than once at the

Temple Garden, when Sri Ramakrishna, too behaved towards them like a true son-in-law! The Holy Mother used to refer to this man as her 'Dacoit-Father,' who, she thought, must have been a robber in his past life.

At Dakshineswar, the Holy Mother lived first with her mother-in-law in a small room in the Temple Garden, and then at a special hut which Sj. Sambhu Mullick, a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, had constructed for her on a piece of land close to the Temple. There she lived for a year and used to send cooked articles for Sri Ramakrishna, who would occasionally visit her during daytime, only once breaking this rule to pass the night, being deterred by heavy rain.

The Holy Mother was next seriously attacked with dysentery, and after partial recovery returned to Jayrambati, where she had a relapse, so much so that her life was in danger. In her last extremity she repaired to the temple of the Goddess Simhavâhini of her village, without the knowledge of her mother and brothers, and prayed, fasting, for recovery, and as is often the case, she was recommended a medicine by the Goddess, which completely cured her.

Thus the Holy Mother came more and more in contact with Sri Ramakrishna either at Kamarpukur or at Dakshineswar. During the last few years of Sri Ramakrishna's life, and through his last illness, she was always serving him, silently, whole-heartedly, amid the most untoward circumstances, cheerfully undergoing superhuman labours and never uttering a word of murmur. At Dakshineswar she had a couple of very small rooms, called the Nahbatkhana, and here she lived and cooked for Sri Ramakrishna and often for his devotees, unobserved by the crowd of

visitors who daily frequented the Temple Garden. She had to get up at 3 or 4 a.m., before any one was awake, finish her ablutions, then attend to her daily duties and engage herself in her spiritual exercises. This was her routine day after day, month after month, for several years. Only a few young devotees whom Sri Ramakrishna had introduced to her, could have access to her. Of course, she was visited by the women devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, who found great comfort and solace from her. One night, while descending into the Ganges in the dark, she had well nigh trod on a crocodile which was lying on the steps. Henceforth she always took a lantern with her. This confined life for years together must have given her that rheumatism from which she suffered ever afterwards.

The strenuousness of her duties was increased a hundredfold when Sri Ramakrishna first had that throat complaint in 1885, which gradually developed into cancer. After a few months of fruitless treatment at Dakshineswar he was removed to a hired house at Shampukur, Calcutta, and then to the Cossipur Garden. At Shampukur, the Holy Mother's services were badly required, and though Sri Ramakrishna was diffident whether she, being accustomed to privacy, would be able to live in that house among so many male inmates, she cheerfully undertook to go through the ordeal, and satisfactorily performed all the duties, resting only for three or four hours in the night. It is needless to say that she had to get up still earlier here than at Dakshineswar. As ill-luck would have it, however, neither her best efforts, nor those of the devotees, including among others the sturdy band of would-be Saanyasins headed by Swami Vivekananda, were of any avail to bring

about a recovery, and in August, 1886, the soul of Sri Ramakrishna passed off into regions immortal, throwing his countless devotees and admirers into the direst of calamities.

In pursuance of an orthodox Hindu custom, the Holy Mother was putting off her ornaments, and was about to take off the bangles, when quite unexpectedly she saw the radiant form of Sri Ramakrishna who seized her hands and forbade her to remove the bangles, saying he was just as he had been, and there was no need for her to take the mourning weeds. So the Holy Mother retained the bangles, and from that day arranged for regular daily worship and food-offering to Sri Ramakrishna. She knew that it was Mother Kali who moved amongst men in the form of Sri Ramakrishna, and it is said that after his Mahasamadhi she wept in the words, "O Mother, where art Thou gone, leaving me alone!" Surely such a relation between husband and wife is most unique in the world and one that compels all to pause and revere.

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother lived sometimes in Calcutta or Belur under the filial care of Swami Yogananda and, after the Mahasamadhi of the latter, that of Swami Saradananda, and sometimes in her village home with her brother, or at Kamarpukur, which was four miles from her place. When Swami Vivekananda was ready to go to America for the Chicago Parliament of Religions, he prayed for the Holy Mother's blessings from her village home, and Swamiji has mentioned with pride that it was her blessings that achieved for him such a signal victory over the savants of the West, in 1893. Swamiji, as indeed all the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, had unbounded faith and devotion

for the Holy Mother and was always anxious to make a permanent place for her in or about Calcutta. It was his cherished desire to start a Women's Math with the Holy Mother as the centre of inspiration. This permanent home has been made, but not during the life-time of Swamiji, at 1, Mukherji Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta, where the Udbodhan Office, and the Ramakrishna Math, Calcutta, are also located. The nucleus of a Women's Math has also been started, attached to the Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Baghbazar, and the Holy Mother was ever its fountainhead of inspiration.

Since the formation of the Ramakrishna Order of Monks the Holy Mother used to initiate select members of the same with Mantrams, thus paving the way for them to sure Realisation. Latterly, she initiated both monastic and householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, not by tens and hundreds, but by thousands. These included a large number of women devotees who thus found a rare opportunity of spiritual enlightenment. She also conferred Sannyasa upon some fortunate individuals. The devotees, of either sex, not only found in her the ideal spiritual guide, but what was far more valued, a real Mother, whose perennial love was more potent than any amount of formal instruction. And her bestowing of initiation was not the common function of that name unfortunately too frequent in Bengal—it was a real transmission of spiritual force, out of a selfless desire to render the aspiring soul permanent good, and entailing upon the transmitter the shouldering of the burden of iniquities of the disciple. Fully conscious as she was of the responsibilities of this most sacred of functions, her infinite heart never said nay to anybody who might seek her spiritual aid.

She was Mother to all, irrespective of caste or creed, and as such her doors, both at her village home and in Calcutta, were always open to all her children, be they white or black, Hindu, or Parsi or Christian. Besides, lots of visitors would come to pay respects to her, and everyone had some endearing token of her overflowing maternal love, in the shape of a word, or a look, or some sweet things to eat. Even the casual visitor was won over by these spontaneous tokens of her motherly affection, and we have known some very intellectual and erudite men overpowered by this surging outflow of love and becoming for the time being almost like children in her presence.

Though possessed of a naive, almost rustic simplicity and having no academical knowledge to boast of, yet she had the clear insight of a genius. Nurtured under the direct care of Sri Ramakrishna, her illumination was complete, and it served as a key to unlock all life's problems, in the simplest of ways. She went straight to the bottom of things and found easy solutions for troubles that beset the human heart. Along with this remarkable insight she had a full measure of firmness to abide by the dictates of this insight. The gentlest of beings, she could never be dislodged from a resolve which she knew was right and just. This combination of mildness with firmness which is a characteristic of a genius, was clearly noticeable in her. She was a personification of considerateness. Among those who visited her at her village-home were many who were accustomed to the comforts of town-life, and the Holy Mother would perhaps be seen, early in the morning, asking of her neighbour if she had milked her cows, for she wanted some milk for "her son to take tea with"! Every mother dearly

loves her own son, but has anybody seen such ethereal love for the sons of *all* mothers? And how she would work the whole day, and a great part of the night, to serve her children who came from distant parts of the country, though herself suffering from rheumatism, and often from the after-effects of malarial fever to which her country-home, like all unfortunate West Bengal villages, was particularly a prey! Her kindness to her brothers was exemplary, nay, it exceeded human proportions, and the amount of care and trouble she took for a niece who had been left to her care by the dying father was simply astonishing. The girl was very sickly and her mother was not altogether sane; so the Holy Mother had to suffer all sorts of physical and mental torment for their sake. But nobody ever heard a murmur of enqui from her lips, and she patiently bore all these troubles as if she had given them a boon not to be displeased with them. In fact, she was forgiveness personified, as she was also an emblem of endurance. Sri Ramakrishna had emphasised on her the value of fortitude, with the words, "Forbear, forbear, forbear,—one who does so survives, but one who fails to do so, comes to ruin." Those who have come in contact with the Holy Mother knew how literally she carried out the above precept. Her character naturally reminded one of the glorious life of Sita.

Her frame was latterly much debilitated by repeated attacks of malaria, the sustained exertions for the recovery of the girl above referred to, which scarcely gave her any time to eat or rest, might have enfeebled her constitution all the more, thus making it more liable to attacks of fever. The last illness proved most tenacious and ultimately fatal. She was

brought from home to her Calcutta residence and placed under the most expert medical aid, Western and indigenous. But she sorely needed rest from her life-long toils and cares for the sake of others, and Sri Ramakrishna finally took her back to his side on the 21st July last, at 1-30 a.m. Her sacred remains were taken over to the Belur Math, and consigned to the flames amid proper ceremony on the next day. Her Mahasamadhi has cast a deep gloom over the hearts of all devotees, and has created a void which will never be filled, until perhaps it pleases the Divine Mother to incarnate Herself once more. To all those who personally knew her, the loss is terrible, and their only consolation is in the thought that such personages are born once in an age through the Divine Will, that they play their part, and that when the play is over they are once more gathered to the Primal Source whence they came. And we know that wherever else such souls may be, the devotees' heart is their best throne, and we are to seek there for the Presence of the Holy Mother, blessing us and showing us the way to Peace, Blessedness and Truth !

सर्वमङ्गलमङ्गल्ये शिवे सर्वार्थसाधिके ।

शरण्ये त्र्यम्बके गौरि नारायणि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

M.

THE INFLUENCE OF INDIA ON WESTERN CIVILISATION.

[A lecture delivered by Swami Abhedananda on May 1, in the Paul Elder Gallery in America.]

MANY people have an idea that India is inhabited by idolatrous heathens, who have neither philosophy, ethics, science nor religion, and that whatever they possess in that line they have acquired from the Chris-

tian missionaries ; but since the Parliament of Religions at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, the educated men and women of this country have cast aside all such erroneous notions. They know that India is inhabited by the descendants of the ancient Aryan family, from which are descended in turn the Anglo-Saxon and Latin races. Though we are known as Hindus the word does not mean anything to us. This name was originally given to us by those who came from the West, like the Persians and the Greeks who invaded India from the north-west. In that part of India you will notice on the map that there is a river known as the Indus ; this river was called Sindhu in Sanskrit. The Greeks and Persians call it Hindu. Hence those who lived on the other side of this river were called Hindus.

The educated men and women of this country understand to-day that India has always been the fountainhead of every system of philosophy—that India has produced, since ancient times, a nation of philosophers. Their civilisation goes back to 5000 years before Christ. While the nations of Europe were tattooing their bodies, living in caves, wearing animal skins and eating animal flesh, the Hindus were already civilised. If we read the writings and historical accounts left by Pliny, Strabo, Megasthenes, Herodotus, Porphyry and a host of other ancient authors of different countries, we shall see how highly the civilisation of India was regarded by them. In fact, between the years 1500 and 500 B. C. the Hindus were so far advanced in religion, metaphysics, philosophy, science, art, music and medicine that no other nation could stand as their rival or compete with them in any of these branches of knowledge. On the contrary, many of the nations which came in contact with the Hindus through trade or otherwise, accepted the Hindu ideas and moulded their own after them. Herodotus, who lived in the fifth century B. C., states that the Hindus were the greatest nation

of that age. They were more civilised than the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks or the Romans. Victor Cousin, the eminent French philosopher whose knowledge of European philosophy was unrivalled, writes :

"When we read the poetical and philosophical monuments of the East—above all, those of India, which are beginning to spread in Europe,—we discover there many a truth, and truths so profound, and which make such a contrast with the meanness of the results at which the European genius has sometimes stopped, that we are constrained to bend the knee before the philosophy of the East and to see in this cradle of the human race the native land of the highest philosophy." Elsewhere he declares that "India contains the whole history of philosophy in a nutshell."

When we study the voluminous writings of the six different schools of philosophy which the great thinkers of ancient India developed during the period between 2000 and 500 B. C., we find that the thinkers of those days anticipated the conclusions of Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hume, Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, Hegel, Ralph Waldo Emerson and others. Well has it been said by Sir Monier Williams that "the Hindus were Spinozaites 2000 years before Spinoza was born, they were Darwinians centuries before Darwin, they were evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of evolution was accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like evolution existed in any other language of the world." In their attempts to solve the mysteries of the phenomenal world, Hindu seers of truth developed six principal systems of philosophy, each having numerous branches of its own.

Kapila, who lived about 700 B. C., was the father of the theory of evolution in India. He traced the evolution of the world to one eternal cosmic energy, which is called in Sanskrit, Prakriti (Latin, Procreatrix, the creative energy). He did not believe in the

creation of the world out of nothing in six days, as you are taught from your childhood in Sunday schools. Science is now advocating the idea of the evolution of the world from one eternal energy. The Sankhya philosophy of Kapila is devoted entirely to the systematic, logical and scientific explanation of the process of cosmic evolution from that primordial energy. Professor Hopkins says in his "Religions of India"—"Both Thales and Parmenides were indeed anticipated by Hindu sages, and the Eleatic school seems to be but a reflection of the Upanishads. The doctrines of Anaximander and Heraclitus were perhaps not known first in Greece." He also says: "Plato is full of Sankhyan thought worked out by him but taken from Pythagoras." Frederic Schlegel writes: "The Divine origin of man, as taught by the Vedanta, is continually inculcated, to stimulate his efforts to return, to animate him in the struggle, and incite him to consider a reunion and reincorporation with Divinity as the one primary object of every action and reaction. Even the loftiest philosophy of the Europeans, the idealism of reason, as it is set forth by the Greek philosophers, appears in comparison with the abundant light and vigour of Oriental idealism like a feeble Promethean spark in the full flood of heavenly glory of the noon-day sun, faltering and feeble and ever ready to be extinguished."

From prehistoric times India has been the motherland of the different branches of knowledge such as, geometry, algebra, arithmetic, trigonometry, music, medicine, astronomy and higher ethical religion. The earliest records of the civilisation of India have been handed down to us through generations from mouth to mouth long before the art of writing was known to the people. These records are known as the Vedas, of which the Rig-Veda is the oldest. The science of geometry was first invented by the Hindus from the Vedic rules for the construction of sacrificial altars; from these rules they gradually

developed geometry, and it has been admitted by great scholars that the world owes its first lesson in this science not to Greece, but to India. The geometrical theorem that the square described on the hypotenuse of a rectangular triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of its other two sides, was ascribed by the Greeks to Pythagoras, but it was known in India at least two centuries before Pythagoras was born. These rules formed a part of the *Sūlva Sūtras* which date from the 8th century B. C. Professor E. W. Hopkins says:—"Before the sixth century B. C. all the religio-philosophical ideas of Pythagoras were current in India. If there were but one or two of these cases, they might be set aside as accidental occurrences, but such coincidences are too numerous to be the result of chance." After geometry fell out of use among the Hindus, all geometrical problems were represented by algebra. The Greeks could not rival the Hindus in the science of numbers.

The world owes decimal notation to India; arithmetic as a practical science would have been impossible without it. This, as well as algebra was learnt from the Hindus by the Arabs who translated it in the 8th century A. D.; Leonardo da Pisa first introduced algebra into Europe in the 13th century.

The Hindus were the first teachers of plane and spherical trigonometry.

In astronomical observations the Hindus were the first to fix the lunar mansions, lunar zodiac and the division of the constellations. The Chinese and Arabs borrowed these from India.

In medicine the Hindus were highly advanced. Dr. Royle of King's College, London, wrote in 1837 his celebrated essay on "Hindu Medicine" in which he showed that Hippocrates, the Father of medicine, who lived in Greece in the 4th century B. C., borrowed his *Materia Medica* from India. Dr. Royle says, "We owe our first system of medicine to the Hindus." Alexander the Great always

had Hindu physicians in his camp for he preferred them to the Greek physicians. Megasthenes, Nearchus and Arrian spoke highly of the wonderful healing powers of the Hindu physicians.

The Hindus first developed the science of music from the chanting of the Vedic hymns. The *Sama Veda* was specially meant for music. And the scale with the seven notes and three octaves was known in India centuries before the Greeks had it.

It will be interesting to know that Wagner was indebted to the Hindu science of music, especially for his principal idea of the "leading motive": and this is perhaps the reason why it is so difficult for many Western people to understand Wagner's music. He became familiar with Hindu music through Latin translations.

Chemistry—in Sanskrit, *Rasāyana*—was also familiar to the Hindus from very early times. "The alkalis and acids were early known to the Hindus and were borrowed from them by the Arabians. The Hindus were acquainted with the oxides of copper, iron, lead, tin, zinc; with the sulphurets of iron, copper, antimony, mercury and arsenic; with the sulphates of copper, zinc and iron; with the diacetate of copper and the carbonates of lead and iron."

Dr. Royle says:—"Though the ancient Greeks and Romans used metallic substances as external applications, it is generally supposed that the Arabs were the first to prescribe them internally." It can be shown that the Arabs learned this from the Hindu physicians.

Vegetarianism originated in India and was spread by Pythagoras among the Greeks. The idea of the fifth element—the ether of space (*Akasha*)—was known in India before the Greeks and Egyptians knew anything about it.

Buddha, the founder of the great religion which is known as Buddhism, was born in India and lived about 500 B. C. His disciples and followers built temples and monuments

—also they made caves out of the solid rock. Some of these may be seen to-day in a good state of preservation. Wherever the Buddhists went they carried their arts and sciences with them. Asoka, the great Buddhist emperor, the Constantine of the East, sent out missionaries from China to Egypt and from Siberia to Ceylon to spread the doctrines of Buddha, of peace and good-will. A record of their wanderings, of the success with which their work met, their treaties with the monarchs of various countries may be seen in the rock-hewn inscriptions which have been found in Egypt, Palestine, in different parts of Asia, west and east. These Buddhist monks were the great civilizers of the ancient world. The Buddhist caves of Karli and Ellora of the pre-Christian era gave the first idea of cathedral; and the so-called Gothic architecture was to be found in the old temples of southern India.

The Hindus of ancient India traded with Syria, Egypt and Babylon and their soldiers wore armour made of steel and they used steel weapons. They were the first to use gun-powder—the Chinese got it from them.

We know from authentic sources that Hindu philosophers were living in Greece at the time of Socrates. There is a record of a conversation between a Hindu philosopher and Socrates. The Hindu asked Socrates what he was trying to gain. Socrates answered that his philosophy consisted in inquiries about the nature of man, upon which the Hindu smiled and said, "How can you know things human without knowing things Divine?" None other than a Hindu could have given such an answer, because the Hindus ascribe all true knowledge to Divine origin and do not care much for knowledge of human affairs.

Christianity as a religion owes much to India. For instance, the idea of the immaculate conception, of the birth of a saviour from a virgin, of an incarnation of God, of the immortality of the soul, the practice of baptism

by water—all these were prevalent in India long before the birth of Jesus Christ.

The monastic system and the nunnery were first established in India by Buddha 500 years before Christ. Buddha's son was the first monk and Buddha's wife the first nun. Those who have studied Schopenhauer's philosophy have undoubtedly noticed that it was full of Buddhist ideas as well as the principles of Vedanta philosophy. He paid a great tribute to the latter when he said—"There is no study more beneficial and elevating to mankind than the study of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, and it will be the solace of my death." Professor Max Muller, who was the greatest Sanskrit scholar of the day, was also greatly influenced by the ideals which he learned from the Hindu writings. Ralph Waldo Emerson was the first pioneer of the Hindu philosophy in this country. It was Carlyle who gave him his first copy of the Gita. After studying it Emerson immortalised it in his poem "Brahma." "If the red slayer thinks he slays, or the slain thinks he is slain, he knows not well the subtle ways, I keep and pass and turn again" is his free translation of the verse which runs like this—"If the slayer thinks he slays, or if the slain thinks he is slain, they do not know the truth. The soul can neither slay nor be slain."

Thoreau, the Concord sage, was also deeply imbued with the sublime teachings of Vedanta. "The Hindus," he writes, "are more serenely and thoughtfully religious than the Hebrews. They have, perhaps, a purer, more independent and impersonal knowledge of God. Their religious books describe the first inquisitive and contemplative access to God; the Hebrew bible, a conscientious return, a grosser and more personal repentance. Repentance is not a free and fair highway to God. A wise man will dispense with repentance. It is shocking and passionate. God prefers that you approach Him thoughtfully, not penitent, though you are the chief of sin-

ners. It is only by forgetting yourself that you draw near to Him.

"The calmness and gentleness with which the Hindu philosophers approach and discourse on forbidden themes is admirable.

"What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary, which describes a loftier course through a purer stratum—free from particulars, simple, universal. It rises on me like the full moon after the stars have come out, wading through some far summer stratum of sky.

"The Vedanta teaches how 'by forsaking religious rites the votary may obtain purification of mind.'

"One wise sentence is worth the State of Massachusetts many times over.

"The religion and philosophy of the Hebrew are those of a wilder and ruder tribe, wanting the civility and intellectual refinement and subtlety of the Hindus.

"I do not prefer one religion or philosophy to another. I have no sympathy with the bigotry and ignorance which makes transient and partial-puerile distinctions between one man's faith and another's, as Christian and heathen. I pray to be delivered from narrowness, partiality, exaggeration, bigotry. To the philosopher, all sects, all nations are alike. I like Brahma, Hari or Buddha, the Great Spirit, as well as God."

The Hindus have always been the teachers of higher ethics, of philosophy and religion. Wherever they went they preached their doctrines of peace and good-will. They taught that the highest truth may be realised in this life. They did not consider civilisation as a means of extracting wealth from other nations, nor that a man is civilised when he is untruthful, when he is selfish. Their civilisation was founded upon moral and spiritual laws. Buddha taught that hatred is never conquered by hatred; that hatred is overcome by love; that avarice is overcome by generosity and evil by good. To-day Western

civilisation is just beginning to wake up to the fact that robbing poorer nations does not pay, that it ruins the robber in the end. The highest standard of civilisation must rest upon the ethical law. That law does not teach the survival of the fittest, but it makes us realise that the survival of the fittest is the law which governs the animal nature. When we shall have learned *to make others fit to survive*, we shall have risen above the animal plane; we shall be worthy to be called human beings. How far the ideal can be practised in this Western civilisation remains to be seen. The ideal is that we should control our brutal nature, perpetuate our spiritual insight, and embrace all mankind as children of divinity; then should we belong to one brotherhood, to one family; every action of our lives would be a free offering to humanity for the good of humanity. That is the ideal of civilisation that modern India holds in her bosom.

EPISTLES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(Translated from Bengali.)

CLXXVIII.

श्री नमो जगन्ने सनत्कुण्डलाय ।

Almora,
The 21st July, 1897.

My dear—,

I am very glad to receive your letter and go through all the contents. Your wishes about the Orphanage are very good, and Sri Maharaj will not fail to fulfil them at an early date. Try your best to found a permanent centre.....Never worry about money. To-morrow I shall leave Almora for the plains, and wherever there will be made some stir, I shall open a subscription list for famine,—set your mind easy on that score. When in every district there will be a Math on the model of our Math in Calcutta, then will my heart's desire be fulfilled. Let not the

work of preaching, too, be at a standstill, and greater even than preaching, is the work of imparting education. By means of lectures and the like, the village people must be taught religion, history and such other subjects,—specially, history. To help this our educational work there is a Society in England which, as I find from reports, is doing excellent work. In time we shall get help of this kind from everywhere, don't be frightened. They only do work who think that help *will* come, directly they are on the field of work.

All strength is in you, have faith in it. It will not go unmanifested. Accept my heartiest love and blessings, and convey them to the Brahmacharin. Write now and then fiery letters to the Math so that all may take heart and work. Victory to the Guru!

Yours afily.

Vivekananda.

CLXXIX.

(Written to a Bengalee lady.)

Lahore,

15th November, 1897.

Dear Mother,

It is a matter of deep regret that inspite of my earnest wishes I do not find it feasible to go to Karachi this time and see you. First, because Captain and Mrs. Sevier, who have come from England and are travelling with me for the last nine months nearly, are very anxious to buy a land at Dehradun and start an orphanage there. It is their special request that I should go and open the work. This makes it unavoidable to go to Dehradun.

Secondly, owing to my kidney troubles I cannot count upon a long life. Even now it is one of my desires to start a Math in Calcutta, towards which I could do nothing yet. Moreover, the people of my country have withheld the little help that they used to give to our Math of late. They have got a notion that I have brought plenty of money from England!! Over and above that, it is impossible to celebrate Sri Ramakrishna's

Festival this year, for the proprietors of Rasmani's garden would not let me go there as I am returned from the West!! Hence my first duty lies in seeing the few friends we have in Rajputana and trying my best to have a centre in Calcutta. For these reasons I have been very sorry to postpone my tour to Sindh for the present. I shall try my best to go there via Rajputana and Kathiawar. Please be not sorry. Never for a day do I forget you all. But duty must be done first. It will ease me of my anxiety when a Math is established in Calcutta. Then I can hope that the work at which I struggled all my life through all sorts of privation and suffering, will not die out after I cease to live in this body. I start for Dehradun this very day. After a week's stay there, to Rajputana, thence to Kathiawar, and so on.

With blessings,

Yours sincerely,

Vivekananda.

CLXXX.

(Written to the same.)

Dehradun,

The 24th November, 1897.

Dear Mother,

I have duly received your letter and that of dear H—. Of course you have ample reason to feel sorry for, but you see, I couldn't help it. And what took me here also became a fiasco, neither could I go to Sindh. It is the Lord's will.....It is no use —'s taking leave of absence and coming to Hyderabad and so forth. You must have suffered much inconvenience. All is the Lord's will. Any the least trouble undergone, is bound to produce its excellent results. Friday next I shall leave this place, and have a mind to go via Saharanpur to Rajputana direct. I am doing well now, and trust you too are in health and peace of mind. * *

With best love and blessings,

Yours sincerely,

Vivekananda.

INDIAN HISTORY AND THE ORIENTAL SCHOLARSHIP OF EUROPE.

EUROPEAN scholarship in the political history of India in the post-Alexandrian period is a fruitful source of study, though this remark even must be accepted with certain reservations. But with regard to the social history of India—in religion and philosophy—it may be termed historical anarchy and with some honourable exceptions, a splendid display of colossal ignorance. We wonder to see how strange conclusions have been drawn, how good sense and good judgment have often been given a good-bye by these virulent critics and how they have been actuated by a lurking prejudice when they have come to deal with Hindu civilisation in pre-historic times. Europeans have failed to grasp the Indian mind. They have been too much prone to advance strange theories and wreckless opinions with regard to those principles on which the entire structure of Hindu civilisation has been grounded. Their mode of thought, environments and scepticism as to the ability of the Indians to unravel the mysteries of the universe, and their unfounded belief in the non-existence of materials and opportunities for scientific observation in those remote ages for finding out the truths which racked the brains of their most scientific minds centuries afterwards, are overwhelming proofs of their inherent drawback to tackle the historical questions of India. Their attempts in this unexplored region of Indian mythology and history are laudable indeed for foreigners and they deserve our gratitude for opening before our minds new vistas of thought, and for drawing our attention to our own mythology, religion and philosophy, but their besetting fault is their mistrust of Indian intelligence. One scholar, Roth, went so far as to assert that the proud privilege of carrying on research in the Rig-Veda belongs only to the scholars of Europe, as they would have more regard for truth than Indians whose orthodoxy will stand in the way of its correct appreciation and right explanation. But we do not believe that these European scholars who try to detract the Indian intellect in the name of historical criticism, and unhesitatingly relegate even the most fundamental facts and

broad and patent truths to the cold shade of neglect and indifference, will be prepared to accept without murmur the rational exposition of the Bible by a learned and scholarly Indian who may advance his claim as the best judge of Biblical passages and Christian canonical and apocryphal books. The Indians who were gifted by nature with a fine intellect, wrote valuable books in philosophy, poetry and science. The natural bent of the national mind for a contemplative mood precluded them from recording contemporary events which we call history. Of the castes in ancient times, the Brahmanas were the most cultured, but they devoted almost all their attention to the realisation of the Highest Being. Though they formulated rites and rituals tending to the consummation of the desire so dear to their heart, yet, with all their philosophic indifference to the relation of mundane things and the changes in their political history, they have preserved for us the finest flowers of their splendid genius in their writings which embrace a vast variety of subjects and which have excited the wonder and elicited the unstinted admiration from even the most hostile critics. The high standard of civilisation to which the Indian society attained in those dark ages of high antiquity, and compared with which the civilisations of Greece and Rome appear as things of yesterday, shows the splendid achievement of human genius in India.

Many of the Oriental scholars, as for instance Max Muller himself, who is made so much of by a certain section of our countrymen, have called the Vedas the childish babblings of irrational minds, though they do not admit their inability to overcome the barrier of language and grasp the true meaning of the Vedic Suktas. We cannot and must not doubt the truth of a thing because it happened thousands of years before the birth of Christ, nor can we call in question facts or ignore truths because we cannot and do not know for certain whether those Vedic Indians had means of carrying on astronomical observations in the face of recorded opinions. The long ages that have elapsed, the changes and revolutions that took place

from time to time in the form of government, the utter disregard of those sages to keep or preserve any record of their doings and the peculiar bent of the national mind to note down only conclusions and not methods, may have been responsible for the complete disappearance of any tangible proof to satisfy the fastidious taste of the Western scholars. In their zeal to strictly apply the theory of evolution in the field of historical criticism, they have been blind to truths. Happily the wealth of information placed at our disposal by such eminent embryologists as Mendel, Devries, Herbank, has explored the theory that man is akin to monkeys by consanguinity. When the Rishis of the Vedic age, who composed their immortal songs about 4000 B. C. (according to Max Muller 1200 B. C.) were so near to the age when man was born of the monkey, they cannot, according to the strange logic of the Vedic scholars of Western countries, be wiser than the enlightened people of the 19th or 20th century. This blind prejudice has led them to filch from the venerable Rishis their due; they cannot conceive that those fathers of the Aryan race could have discovered truths which are even wonders to the cultured minds of modern times. It is our earnest request to our countrymen not to accept all the conclusions of Western scholars as gospel truths, but to look into things themselves, not like servile imitators, but as independent critics, to counteract groundless apprehensions and boldly pull down two of their pet theories—theories of interpolation and evolution—with fit weapons from the armoury of the Vedic age.

The Renaissance has begun in Bengal under the aegis of the Calcutta University which has taken up the whole course of post-graduate teaching and research under the able guidance of noted educationists and savants. Professors B. N. Seal, Jadunath Sarkar, R. C. Mazumdar, Radha Kumud Mukerjee, Gauranga Nath Banerjee, Ramaprasad Chanda, Surendra Nath Sen, Radhagovinda Basak, Mr. K. P. Jayaswal, Babus Akshay Kumar Moitra, Rakhal Das Banerjee and others are doing excellent research work in history. In chemistry Dr. P. C. Ray and his glorious band of chemists, and in physics Dr. J. C. Bose are proving the capacity of the Indian intellect in the field of original research. What is wanted now is the collaboration of devoted workers who would carry on research work in all

the branches of history, philosophy and religion with more attention, thoroughness, and good sense.

HARIPADA GHOSAL.

OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE.

“NO Hindu asks you about mere things. The question he asks is: ‘What is the future of my Soul?’” said an American gentleman who has recently returned from India.

Sitting in a room in the Metropolis of the West—New York, which since the war has become the Capital of the Western world, I felt like going down on my knees before the race to whom I belong. What a privilege to be a Hindu! We do not raise mere questions; we ask for the future of our Soul!

We do not believe that because a race owns railway lines, therefore it must be great. We do not hold that machine guns will supplant the rosary as a weapon; nor do we for a moment agree that the life and growth of a race can be measured by its statistics of export and import.

Our measuring rod for culture and growth is the eternal standard; a personal vision of God. “Have you seen God?” has been our one simple question. If you have seen Him, the rest has been beholden; and if you have not seen Him, no matter what you see, or say is the meaningless prattle of a child. You may circumnavigate the world, but that means nothing if you have not found “the Homeland of Eternity.” No Hindu believes that anything short of the silence of the Lord can heal the bleeding heart of man, or feed his hungry soul.

To-day when the whole world is weltering in the heartless and hopeless fatalism of materiality, India is one of the countries that can succour the spirit of man and renew the upward surge of his being. India must speak, for she has the authentic Voice. Woe unto those who wish to smother it under a vain intellectualism or still vainer sensuality of nationalism and personal greed.

Nationalism is the other name of “gregarious gluttony,” says our Rabindranath. If you are opposed to the greed of one person, you should not countenance the greed of a country or a race.

India is not going to repeat the stupidity and bigotry of the West. She is the homeland of gods and prophets, what can induce her to stoop to the money-market and poison-gas factory?

No, those who are nearer the core of India's spirituality are certain that India will carry Humanity's banner high, no stain of gore shall come near it; nor greed shall soil it. We who built the golden throne of Buddha have naught to do with armoured cars and bombs dropped from air-ships.

Those who are Hindu only in words may try to barter away our spiritual heritage for the tinsel trappings of martial glory and the base self-satisfaction. We are the servants of the Lord. We bear the insignia of love. It is by our power to love that we shall stand or fall—we will stand. "Though you hit me with shard how can I withhold from you Love?" A Hindu said those words. As long as there remain half a dozen Hindus who can live, realise, then utter sentences like that, India shall and can not be deposed from her throne of grandeur. Hers is the grandeur of humility; hers the nobility of spiritual equality. She alone can give the word that will strike off the fetters of materialism that War has put on humanity. India, my Mother—speak!

DHAN GOPAL MUKHERJEE.

VIVEKACHUDAMANI.

(Continued from page 189.)

एव गतं केन वा नीतं कुत्र लीनमिदं जगत् ।

अधुनेव मया दृष्टं नास्ति किं महदद्भुतम् ॥४८३॥

483. Where is the universe gone, by whom removed, and where is it merged? It was just now seen by me, and has it ceased to exist?—It is passing strange!

किं हेयं किमुपादेयं किमन्यत्किं विलक्षणम् ।

अखण्डानन्दपीयूषपूर्णं ब्रह्ममहार्णवे ॥४८४॥

484. In the ocean of Brahman filled with the nectar of Absolute Bliss, what is to be shunned and what accepted, what is other (than oneself) and what different?

[*What shunned &c.*—There is nothing besides the One Atman, and the aspirant is identified with That.]

न किञ्चिदत्र पश्यामि न शृणोमि न वेदयन्मम ।
स्वात्मनैव सदानन्दरूपेणास्मि विद्वन्मयाः ॥४८५॥

485. I do not see, or hear, or know anything in this. I exist as the Self, the Eternal Bliss—distinct from everything else.

[*See &c.*—All finite ideas have ceased.

In this—state of Realisation.

Distinct from everything else—being the Subject, whereas all else are objects.]

नमो नमस्ते गुरवे महात्मने

विमुक्तसंज्ञाय सदुत्तमाय

नित्याद्वयानन्दरसस्वरूपिणे

भूम्ने सदाऽपारदयाम्बुधान्ने ॥४८६॥

486. Repeated salutations to thee, O noble-minded Teacher, who art devoid of attachment, the best among the good souls, the embodiment of the essence of Eternal Bliss—the One without a second,—who art infinite, and ever the boundless ocean of mercy;—

यत्कटाक्षशयिसान्द्रचन्द्रिका-

पातधूतभवतापजश्रमः ।

प्राप्तवानहमखण्डवैभवा-

नन्दमात्मपदमक्षयं क्षणात् ॥४८७॥

487. Whose glance, like the shower of concentrated moon-beams, has removed the exhaustion brought on by the afflictions of the world, and in a moment admitted me to the undecaying status of the Atman, the Bliss of infinite majesty!

[*Afflictions.....world*—those arising from the body, from other creatures and from physical phenomena.]

धन्योऽहं कृतकृत्योऽहं विमुक्तोऽहं भवग्रहात् ।

नित्यानन्दस्वरूपोऽहं पूर्णोऽहं त्वदनुग्रहात् ॥४८८॥

488. Blessed am I, I have attained the consummation of my life, and am free from the clutches of transmigration,—I

am the Essence of Eternal Bliss, I am infinite,—all through thy mercy!

असङ्गोऽहमनङ्गोऽहमलिङ्गोऽहमङ्गुरः ।

प्रतीतोऽहमनतोऽहममर्षोऽहं चिरन्तनः ४८६॥

489. I am unattached, I am disembodied, I am free from the subtle body, and undecaying. I am pacified, I am infinite, I am taintless, and eternal.

[*Disembodied.....subtle body*: I have realised my identity with the Atman, and no longer consider myself as a body or mind.]

अकर्ताहमसोक्ताहमविकारोऽहमक्रियः ।

शुद्धबोधस्वरूपोऽहं केवलोऽहं सदाशिवः ॥४८७॥

490. I am not the doer, I am nor the enjoyer, I am changeless, and beyond activity; I am the Essence of Pure Knowledge, I am Absolute, and identified with Eternal Good.

[*Not the doer &c.*—It is the man under delusion who thinks himself as these. But I am Illumined.]

ब्रह्मः श्रोतुर्वक्तुः कर्तुर्गोक्तुर्विभिन्न एवाहम् ।

निव्यनिरन्तरविष्णुयनिःसीमासङ्गपूर्वबोधात्मा ॥

491. I am indeed different from the seer, listener, speaker, and enjoyer; I am the Atman—eternal, without any break, beyond activity, limitless, unattached, and infinite Knowledge.

[*Different from the seer &c.*—I never identify myself with any activity of the organs or the mind, for I am no longer finite.]

नाहमिदं नाहमदोऽप्युभयोरवभासकं परं शुद्धम् ।

बाह्याभ्यन्तरशून्यं पूर्णं ब्रह्माद्वितीयमेवाहम् ॥४८८॥

492. I am neither this nor that, but the Illuminer of both; I am indeed Brahman, the One without a second, pure, devoid of interior or exterior, and infinite.

[*Neither this nor that*—things that come under direct or indirect perception. It is the body which makes ideas of nearness or remoteness etc. possible.]

निरुपममनादितत्त्वं त्वमहमिदमदशति कल्पनादूरम्
नित्यानन्दैकरसं सत्यं ब्रह्माद्वितीयमेवाहम् ॥४८९॥

493. I am indeed Brahman, the One without a second, matchless, the Reality that has no beginning, beyond such imaginations as thou or I, or this or that, the Essence of Eternal Bliss, the Truth.

नारायणोऽहं नरकान्तकोऽहं

पुरान्तकोऽहं पुरुषोऽहमीशः ।

अखण्डबोधोऽहमसोपसाक्षी

निरीश्वरोऽहं निरहं च निर्ममः ॥४८९॥

494. I am Narayana, the slayer of Naraka, I am the destroyer of Tripura, the Witness of everything; I have no other Ruler but myself, I am devoid of the ideas of 'I' and 'mine.'

[*Naraka*—a demon, son of Earth, killed by Vishnu.

Tripura—the demon of the "three cities," destroyed by Shiva.]

(To be continued).

REVIEW.

Siva and Buddha. By Sister Nivedita, Udbodhan Office, 1, Mukherjee Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta. Price Annas Twelve only.

This interesting handiwork of Sister Nivedita, like many of her beautiful works, is a glowing testimony to her profundity of scholarship and depth of knowledge in our religious lore. She has picked up the precious pearls from the ocean of Hindu mythology and has woven them into the nice fabric of "Siva and Buddha"—the two mighty figures in India. The authoress has traced with balanced erudition how the sublime conception of the great Saint Siva, clad in ashes and lost in meditative commingling with the Infinite One, flashed across the unsophisticated imagination of the early Indo-Aryans, and how the Hindu mind began to work out all sorts of accessories and symbols—in which sometimes the idea of flame, sometimes of mountains and sometimes of hermit is uppermost—all contributing to the completed picture of Siva. Above all her masterly handling of the interesting stories that gathered round the towering figure of Siva is an unfailing record of her deep study in the Hindu Shastras.

No less ingenious is the writer's manoeuvring of the thrilling incidents in the life of Lord Buddha. She has made a graphic presentation of the inscrutable ways of Providence, how the thirst for realities was awakened in the prince at the sight of the woes of men and the vanities of the ephemeral surroundings of his earthly existence, and how his heart became, as it were, a vast throbbing ocean of compassion, for mankind, and not for man only, but for all those living things in whom he saw the power to love and suffer, though they were without human speech. Moved by the painful miseries of all creatures that breathe on earth, Siddhartha, the Light of Asia of the 6th century B. C., in one still moonlit night stole out of the palace "in silent obedience to the voice of the great souls of the universe," to find out the eternal panacea for the suffering humanity. For seven long years in the forest Gautama pursued his search till at last meditating in the night, beneath a Bo-tree, he discovered the Great Secret and found all knowledge and from that time he became known as "Buddha" or the Blessed One. Since then he proclaimed to the world the universal Truth which opened the eyes of mankind to the divine remedies for curing once for all the sores of human life.

This the authoress has described in such a masterly way with her characteristic beautiful style that taking all things together the volume is an invaluable asset to our religious lore; and we have every confidence that the perusal of the contents of this work will unmistakably convey to the minds of the readers the true meaning and ultimate content of human life.

THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION PURI FAMINE RELIEF WORK.

AN APPEAL.

Our workers have opened two centres, one at Bhubaneswar and another at Kanas, about 12 miles from Khurda Road. We learn from them that the distress of the people in those areas is very acute. Many able-bodied persons have left their villages in search of labour. Others have run away, being unable to give a morsel of food to their hungry wives and children; it is impossible to describe in words the piteous condition of these

deserted women and children. Again most of the families have sold away their utensils and clothes to procure rice and now they have absolutely nothing valuable to fall back upon. Coarse rice is selling at 3 seers per rupee but there are very few people who can afford to buy this commodity at such an exorbitant price. People have been actually seen to subsist on herbs and grass seeds called "Sua." Emaciated skeleton-like figures with scarcely any rag about their loins go about for food to fill their hungry stomachs. At many places women put on torn rags of gunnies. Ladies of the middle class families are specially in a precarious situation. Scarcity of cloth has made them unable to stir out from their huts in quest of food. We are confident that this piteous account will suffice to call up the sympathy of the generous public and that they will lose no time in providing for the immediate relief of their unfortunate brethren by helping the Mission with money, rice and cloth.

(a) To have a definite idea of the extent of help required to meet the situation it will be enough if we mention that in 16 villages at Bhubaneswar centre alone, about Rs. 350 worth of rice had to be distributed in one week. We give below the report of our distribution at the above two centres.

| Bhubaneswar— | distr. | vill. | Recipients | Mds. | srs. |
|--------------|--------|-------|------------|------|------|
| | 1st | 3 | 23 | 1 | 6 |
| | 2nd | 3 | 25 | 1 | 10 |
| | 3rd | 4 | 125½ | 6 | 11 |
| | 4th | 16 | 674 | 33 | 28 |
| | 5th | 19 | 678 | 33 | 36 |

In addition about 6 mds. of rice were given to individuals as doles.

| Kanas— | 1st | 27 | 226 | 11 | 12 |
|--------|-----|----|-----|----|----|
| | 2nd | 28 | 282 | 14 | 4 |

In addition about 1 md. of rice was given to individuals as doles.

As will be evident from a glance at the table given above, the number of cases to be relieved is steadily growing but the funds at our disposal are very inadequate even for the purchase of rice. And the necessity for the distribution of cloth is equally urgent.

Contributions in the shape of money, rice or cloth will be thankfully received and acknowledged. Contributions may be sent to either of the following addresses—

(1) The President, Ramkrishna Mission, The Math, Behur, Dist. Hoarrah. (2) The Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission, Udbodhan Office, 1, Mukherjee Lane, Baghbazari, Calcutta.

(Sd.) Saradananda,
Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission.

NEWS AND NOTES.

We have received the following for publication :—

The Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares, has been trying its best to solve some of the civic problems for the last 20 years. From a very small nucleus the institution has grown to its present status capable of accommodating 100 diseased and indigent souls, besides providing for over 200 helpless persons regularly with weekly doles of rice and money in their own houses. All these poor and helpless Narayanas are generally old men and women of all sects belonging to the different provinces of India. But one well-acquainted with the miserable state into which a good many of our fellow-beings are cast in this city, is sure to be of opinion that their want and distress are much in excess of the various works of relief carried on by this institution. For the last four years or so the work has expanded but the help that is being received from the public either in cash or in kind is not adequate, and this has checked further steps of widening the scope of relief. Moreover, the dire pinch of scarcity, especially of cloth, which is felt more or less everywhere, is afflicting this institution too. In response to every call for help our generous countrymen have so long given to the institution every facility for development, and to them it looks again for this pressing need. Cloths for wearing purposes, for shirts, coats and bedsheets are badly needed for the indoor patients of the Home. Even a clean piece of old cloth serves some purpose in a hospital. Donors are requested to mention expressly "for cloth" if they so desire, when they remit money to the Secretary. Annual Reports will be forwarded to any address by the Secretary, Ramkrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares City, when written to.

The Indian Medical Record, Aug. 1920, writes an eulogy of the Ramkrishna Mission, from which we make the following excerpts :—

Wherever these real brothers of mercy have been, they have given very excellent account of themselves. . . . The lesson to be learnt . . . is to have a network of Ramkrishna Mission Homes all over India. Men with a long purse, men with a heart, men with active hands should everywhere be forthcoming to establish these Homes. . . . Ramakrishna Mission Homes are Barnardo Home, Epidemic Hospital, Home for the Incurables and Refuge, all rolled into one. Their organisation is perfect, their management economical but not niggardly, their services are unstinted and what is above all price, love rules the whole service. Men of education, men of character and men endued with selfless devotion are theirs. . . . The most unfortunate part of this Mission is its keeping in the background ; . . no flourish of trumpets, in the shape of laudatory Reports proclaim their deed ; no rich patron claims for them the toll of public donations. All is hushed in silence. . . . But the times are changed. One has got to advertise one's merit in these days—or else has to go under. We wish our Punjabi brethren to take up this noble Mission. Ramkrishna, though a Bengali by birth, was a Universal Super-man—he was an Indian first and then a Bengali or a Hindu. The like of him India has not seen too often.

We commend to our countrymen, all over India, this noble and excellent organisation. Rich men will find a surprisingly high value for their wards and young men with heart and hand will receive a training in manliness, in discipline and in selfless devotion, the full value of which it is difficult to realise. . . . It will be a very good day for Bengal if every young man, while undergoing college education or immediately after leaving it, were to undergo training under the Ramkrishna Mission auspices in this excellent service. . . . We wish our countrymen were as wide awake in these matters as Westerners are—taking every opportunity of drilling the youths and of presenting their country with excellently organised services of various sorts.

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